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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000682

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPDC STRIKES CONCILIATORY TONE IN SECOND BRIEFING
ON MAY 30 AMBUSH

REF: RANGOON 0647

1. SUMMARY: In a June 10 briefing for journalists and diplomats following UN Special Envoy Razali's departure from Rangoon, the Foreign Ministry provided more details of the May 30 ambush of Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) motorcade near Depeyin and side-pedaled on several issues connected to the attack. Deputy Foreign Minister Khin Maung Win announced that an official inquest by the Ministry of Home Affairs is underway and more details would be forthcoming. The COM again requested a full accounting of the injured, dead and detained. She also expressed the expectation that the SPDC would not merely return to the status quo ante May 30 but would take concrete steps forward on the path of national reconciliation. This briefing was unexpectedly conciliatory indicating that the government is on notice that the issue is bigger than access to ASSK and the NLD members - they must try to build some credibility, quickly, if they expect anyone to believe their "commitment to national reconciliation." End Summary.

2. DeputyFonMin (DFM) Khin Maung Win reiterated that the SPDC regarded the events of May 30 as "most unfortunate" and that the "safe custody" measures for ASSK are temporary and will be lifted "as soon as the situation returns to normal." He said Special Envoy Razali was granted the "special gesture" of a meeting with ASSK for two reasons: to show their continuing cooperation with the United Nations, and because of the SPDC's trust in confidence in Mr. Razali himself.

3. He announced that the Ministry of Home Affairs had opened an official inquest into the May 30 "incident." Preliminary investigations show that violence erupted when ASSK's convoy attempted to "plow through a crowd blocking the road." He made much out of the fact that this occurred late at night in "an area with no public lighting, there was much confusion, and things got out of hand." (Note: The government appears to be developing a new approach to describing the situation. Unlike the tone of certainty accompanying the statements of the last press briefing - "There were 5000 people gathered. ... There were no military or police present at the time of the attack. ... Only fifty were injured. ... No arrests were made - the government is emphasizing uncertainty, the confusion and dark, and that the inquest is "ongoing" and more details may yet be uncovered. It gives them more leeway to retract or contradict statements made earlier. End Note.)

4. The DFM "clarified" several statements made at the June 3 briefing (Reftel). He was careful to say, instead of "50 injured" that 48 people presented themselves at the hospital for treatment, leaving the possibility that there were more injured who did not. In response to a question about arrests, he said that no one had been "arrested per se" but that, "as they say in the British newspapers, several people are helping us with our inquiries."

5. He reiterated that both Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo were not hurt in what the SPDC is now calling "a melee" instead of an "incident."

6. Diplomats present reiterated their desire to have access to ASSK and Tin Oo. The COM requested that the government provide a full accounting, including names of the dead and injured at the scene. The DFM replied that he would try to comply. She also expressed the expectation that SPDC would demonstrate their stated commitment to the national reconciliation process not merely by releasing ASSK and other detainees and reopening the NLD offices, but going forward with concrete steps to bring about national reconciliation. The DFM said he shared that sentiment, as "we do not want to return to confrontation."

7. Comment: This briefing was unexpectedly conciliatory. However, the assembled dip corps expressed disappointment that the government continues to stonewall on the issue of access to ASSK and the NLD leadership, and on the issue of the conditions and location of their detention. But it appears that the government is starting to realize that attacking and accusing the NLD of provoking the clash, or claiming an international smear campaign against the SPDC,

won't wash. They are also on notice that the issue is bigger than access to ASSK and the NLD members - they must try to build some credibility, quickly, if they expect anyone to believe their "commitment to national reconciliation". End Comment.
Martinez